

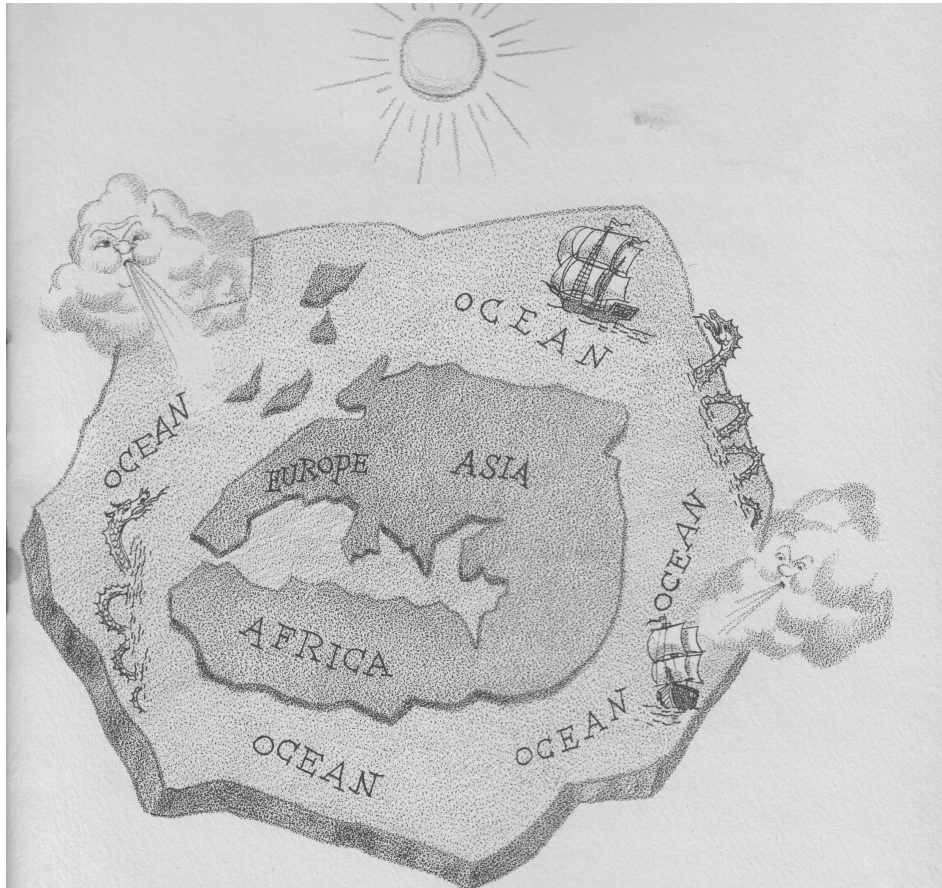
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FREEDOM

*Since slavery is a condition in which
one man owns and controls another, its
opposite, freedom, is a condition in which
each man owns and controls himself.*

Robert LeFevre
President
Freedom School



Modern Mythology

Not too many years ago as the history of the world is told, a vast majority of the people we called civilized believed that the world was both flat and square.

From the theory emerged the conviction that

the known world was a kind of "world island" and that if anyone sailed away from that island he would in time reach the dropping off place.

Here the oceans ended and a sailing vessel could plunge over the edge and fall into space.

Today, this idea sounds utterly absurd and we chuckle amusedly when we are reminded of it. We know better.

But perhaps we should do well to recall that our ancestors only a few hundred years ago considered this idea to be factual. Hence, they viewed any trip at sea which progressed beyond sight of land as dangerous in the extreme.

They depended upon that land in the center of their world as they imagined it to exist. The fact that the world wasn't the way they thought it was in no way lessened their fear.

Today, there is an equally fallacious opinion respecting the importance and function of government. We have organized society around government and it exists in our minds like the "world island" of antiquity. We have led ourselves to believe that society is impossible without government at the core. If anything happened to that core, we would suffer great dangers if not outright death and destruction.

Like the myths of the world's edge, the belief

is wholly irrational, non-scientific and invalid.

Government is force... authority... coercion. But ask yourself this question: For me to behave in society, for me to perform my duties and do my job, just how much force, authority or coercion are necessary in MY case?

Let us grant quickly that some pattern or set of rules is important so that we can do our jobs in an orderly manner. This is obviously true.

But let us examine this carefully. In our homes there is a set of rules which outline procedural behavior. How much force, how much authority, how much coercion is necessarily invoked before the household operates in a reasonably efficient manner?



And how many homes are operated exactly alike? There's the rub.

When government invokes its rules, ALL persons must conform. Variations are forbidden. We are FORCED to obey regardless of our own individual problems or individual talents. No leeway can be permitted.

In other words, when we do NOT have government, we can operate our households in an orderly manner, each family setting up its

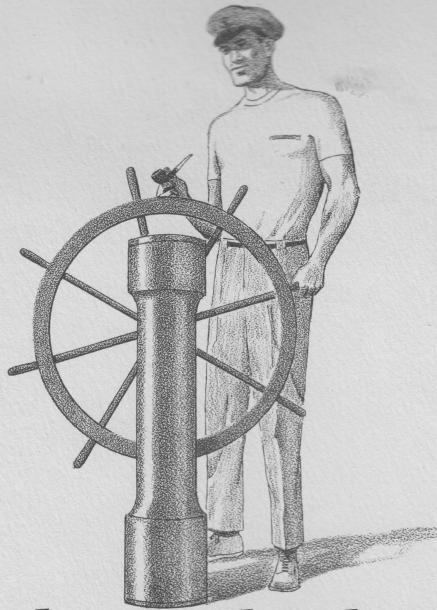
own rules of behavior and so on. And force, if it is invoked at all, is kept to a minimum. Additionally, whatever is done in one home does not necessarily affect what is done in the next home.

But call in government and make it the core of our living, and see what happens. Instantly, we are in the grip of this superstition which tells us that we cannot survive unless we all behave alike. We must think alike, act alike, conform at all costs. Otherwise, society will fall apart. Such compulsion actually produces disorder.

This myth of the dependency on government in every way resembles the "world island" myth of the Middle Ages. It is simply amazing how free the mind becomes when the individual can set this myth aside and permit his mind to function without this fear overshadowing his thought processes.

It was equally invigorating four or five hundred years ago when our ancestors braved the terrors of the unknown to sail into uncharted seas in spite of popular superstition.

One day, if we can conquer our irrational fears and learn to recognize folk-lore when we run across it, we may yet learn to be civilized.



Freedom and Value Judgment

Because of the nature of life, each human being is capable of making individual and independent decisions. This is true because every human being always controls his own energy.

To make decisions at all, individual human beings must have a scale of values. This scale is painstakingly constructed during each person's lifetime. No thinking person is without such a scale.

And each person invariably, and with a re-

markable consistency, ALWAYS makes his decisions in relation to what to him is "good." He is incapable of making any other kind of decision.

The building of this scale of values is, inescapably, a most important function. For man is rational and always does what he does for a reason which to him is important.

Unfortunately, man is not infallible. And though he makes his decisions with reason, this scale of values can be hopelessly out of joint with reality. Hence, many decisions men make are unwise and often they are costly and foolish. Nonetheless, they are made rationally and with full expectation that some kind of profit will accrue as a result of decisions made and actions taken.

Freedom is an intrinsic part of this process. For if a man is prevented by force from making the kind of a decision he wants to make, he will never be able to learn whether his scale of values is a reasonable one. He will be left in the dark as to whether what he wanted to do was wise or foolish. He will be frustrated and, in the end, he will be ignorant.

The same thing results when men are compelled to make decisions or to take actions

which are positively opposed to their own scale of values. Once more the damage is done.

Admitting that free man may err, in no way invalidates the importance of his ability to decide for himself.

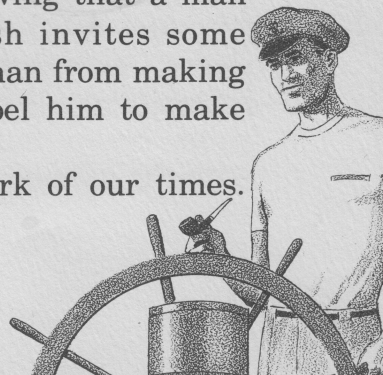
So there are two items of major importance which confront us. Man must be free, for without freedom he cannot learn; he cannot improve; he cannot make the decisions which, wise or foolish, will cause him to progress.

Man must be educated, so that in the process of making decisions, he is trained through his lifetime of experience to erect a scale of values which will be as closely aligned to reality as it is possible for the individual to come.

Since both of these factors are of great importance, both must be cherished and understood.

There is a tendency on the part of many to ignore the importance of freedom in the face of the recognized importance of valid and superior value judgments. Knowing that a man can be either wise or foolish invites some to seek, by force, to prevent man from making foolish decisions and to compel him to make wise decisions.

This is, indeed, the hallmark of our times.



The agency of this compulsion is government.

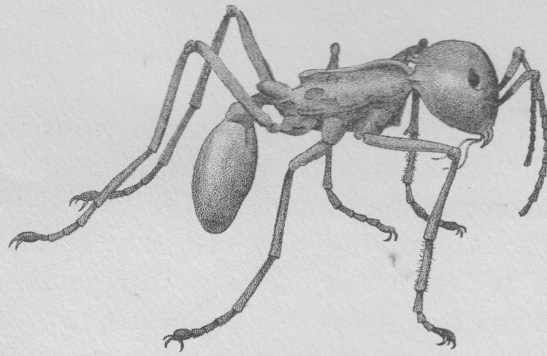
But we must learn quickly that a decision forced and not freely taken is INVARIABLY an immoral decision. Even though the intention of the forcing agency is to prevent an improper or an immoral decision from being made, a forced decision which robs the individual of the will to act for himself or to conclude for himself or to recognize his own errors and hence to educate himself, is immoral on its face.

Granting that we must all strive to make the finest and most moral decisions we are capable of making, in no way removes the nature of man which rests upon individual decisions and not upon collective and forced compliance.

Therefore, though the tendency is to abandon freedom in favor of fixed decisions forced upon us, this tendency must be steadfastly resisted and opposed.

Man's progress, both physically and otherwise, rests upon trial and error. We never know how effective or how great we can be until we try. And freedom means the climate of open choice in which trial can be undertaken.

Our future is geared to freedom FIRST. Our value scales must be individually improved with the passing of time.



Freedom and the Ant

There is no doubt that human kind have urges which at times are in sharp and seething conflict. For instance, security is something desirable and basically a human good.

The desire to acquire is matched by a desire to keep that which we have attained. And to keep means to make secure, to have security.

But opposing the desire to be safe and secure is a desire to advance, to make progress, to overcome obstacles, to adventure and to gain.

This desire stimulates change. No progress can ever occur unless change is permitted.

And the problem with security is that it does not permit change. Or if a small alteration is permitted, it is carefully hemmed in with walls of rules and buttressed by custom and convention.

So, in these two areas man becomes a battle-

ground of conflicting desires. He wants to advance. He wishes to make fast those prior advancements he already has attained.

Without implying that either of these basic drives is "right" or "wrong" intrinsically, we would like to suggest that the desire to progress, to advance, to make new gains, is the civilizing influence.

Millions of years ago the ordinary ant adjusted to its environment. It had worked out a way to survive in colonial splendor. From that day to this, ant colonies have resisted change. There has been security, yes. For survival is a type of security. But there has been no progress for the ant. To be an ant is to be a part of a swarm. Individuality and such things as risk, adventure or change are unheard of, if we may judge by ant behavior.

Long, long ago, that mysterious force which provides us with life and is life, reached a plateau insofar as the evolvement of ants is concerned. The forward motion of this common insect was halted. Ants could be secure in their sandy hills but they could not be free.

There is no such thing as freedom for an ant. The ant is regimented, totally. Individual ant desires, if they exist at all, are sublimated to

the "good" of the colony. Any non-conformist ant would be killed instantly. Change and freedom are tabu among ants.

But man is not an ant.

Earliest known evidence of homo sapiens indicates that man was an innovator and not content with regimentation. True, in certain climes and times, some men have formed a system of tribal life which is as changeless and uninspiring as that of an ant colony. And in such tribal arrangements men learned to survive.

Here, as with the ant, it was the tribe that mattered, never the individual. Personal enterprise was squelched. If it occurred at all, it occurred under rigid rules which determined beforehand a direction pleasing to the tribe. The innovator who rebelled at such control was banished.

No tribe can accept change. For change risks security. And survival and security are closely linked in primitive intelligences.

We would like to emphasize that even tribal life or colonial (ant-like) existence contains risk. Freedom and risk go hand in hand as a matter of course. An innovation by its nature contains uncertainties yet it is still true that

conformity and regimentation also contain dangers.

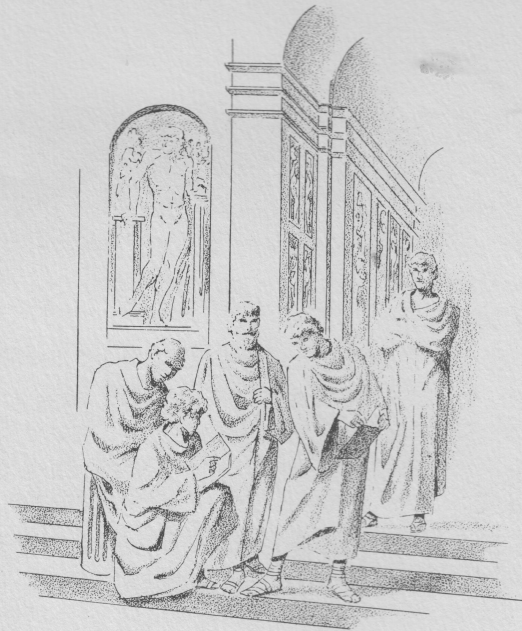
The danger in freedom is that the individual may fail. The danger in social conformity is that it will, if forced, prevent progress.

Hence, were we to try to adjust these two desirable things into our own scale of values we would have to place freedom higher on the scale than mere security. This is necessary for us. For we value freedom and are quite willing to accept attendant responsibilities. When security becomes the topmost value, force will invariably be invoked to prevent others from being free.

Thus, while security may be desirable, enforced security on those who wish to make progress is destructive. We call it immoral. While we grant that a man has a right to seek security and to obtain it, too, we cannot grant that in his search for security he has a right to prevent someone else from being free.

Freedom entails risks which may even result in a better kind of security.

But security when it becomes uniformity and restraint will prevent both freedom and the very security one fancies one has obtained in the beginning.



The Philosophy of Freedom

We have, through the years, laid a certain stress on the importance of a philosophy of freedom.

"Why do you keep talking about a philosophy?" we are asked. "Don't you know most people are not able to reach such intellectual heights? Come on down where we are. Talk in terms we can all understand."

It seems that our friends are saying, "What

good is philosophy, anyhow? That may be the language of savants but what we want is the language of the streets where we live. Give us some concrete answers to our problems and don't bother us with the subtle nuances of conflicting verbiage."

We submit that everyone HAS a philosophy of freedom. It may be valid or invalid to a greater or lesser degree. But everyone does have such a philosophy, all the same. It is impossible to live without it.

Were we to argue that it is possible for a person to change his eating habits, there would surely be little in the way of solid objection. Or if we were to suggest that people could sleep long hours, or short hours; could work long hours or short hours; could be rich or poor depending upon many variables, we would find major agreement.

But if we were to suggest that men could decide not to eat at all, or not to sleep, surely an uproar would ensue. Or if we insisted that everyone could be rich regardless of any and all variables to be applied, we could rightly be accused of irrational argument.

And, we suspect, this is the view many people take of philosophy.



They suppose that a proper area of philosophic discussion would be to debate whether or not man can exist without sleeping. Perhaps some philosophers would like to assay this problem. Not us.

We would set forth the proposition that every human being capable of rational thought already has a philosophy in respect to freedom. He may believe human beings require much freedom, a lesser degree, little or none. But he has a belief here, all the same. And if he has not spent much time in this particular vineyard it is only because he has not glimpsed the fact that freedom, like sleep or food, is a necessity for the human being.

Some men may get along with more or less. But no man gets along with none. And it is curious to us that in a world where there are so many persons devoting themselves to the study of food and diet, the study of rest and sleep, the study of other variables by means of which human beings live and have their being, there are so few devoting themselves to a study of freedom.

It would follow, apparently, not that there isn't much in the way of a freedom philosophy extant, but rather that the philosophy most

have is sadly lacking in realism. We wish freedom for ourselves, of course, even as we accept the idea that freedom will never be.

It is in the nature of man that he will have a scale of values by means of which he will evaluate the world and determine what he will do and what he will not do. This is implicit in man's nature, for each human being is a creature who can and will control his own energy.

He will invariably control his energy to the best of his ability in relation to that which he believes is best for him. Thus, if he is aware of dietary requirements, he will be most careful in obtaining the proper balance to his diet. If he is conscious of his requirement for rest and sleep, the same will apply here.

And it becomes imperative that we recognize his choices in even these areas that are predicated upon his own personal freedom. If man is NOT free, he may not choose his diet or his bedroom, or the hours he wishes to devote to either.

A study and a knowledge of freedom is a prerequisite to all other disciplines of thought. And while we all have a philosophy respecting freedom, it might behoove us to improve our knowledge in this vital area.

The Freedom School is an educational institution offering two-week courses of instruction to adults in the field of economics, philosophy, ethics, history and political science. Two special sessions each year are reserved for executives and those making managerial decisions in business and the professions. Eight comprehensive courses are offered each summer from June through September. Special Workshop and library facilities are available for graduates.

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